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ABSTRACT

A survey instrument to access the statewide impact of school vandalism was sent to every public school district in New Jersey. Information was requested on (1) vandalism costs by categories; (2) comparisons on the costs and incidents of vandalism for the years 1972-73, 1973-74 and 1974-75; (3) location and occurrence of vandal acts; (4) methods, techniques, and devices used to reduce the costs of vandalism; (5) security cost data for exterior building lighting, security equipment, break resistant windows, and security personnel; and (6) vandalism and school security policies. The survey results are presented in a table format preceded by a narrative summary and conclusion from the data within the tables. (Author/MLF)

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AD HOC COMMITTEE TO STUDY SCHOOL VANDALISM

1975 SCHOOL VANDALISM SURVEY

INTRODUCTION

The New Jersey School Boards Association's Ad Hoc Committee to Study School Vandalism was formed in December, 1975 to investigate and make recommendations for delegate consideration on the complex problems of school vandalism. The Vandalism Committee felt that one of the first steps in its study would be to access the statewide impact of school vandalism. To accomplish this end the Vandalism Committee developed a survey instrument which was sent to every public school district in New Jersey.

A total of 249 responses, representing 42% of New Jersey's 586 operating public school districts, were received.

A. Total vandalism costs for the following classifications:

1. Glass Breakage
2. Fire-Arson
3. Theft (stolen equipment and furniture)
4. Property Destruction (graffiti, smashed furniture, washroom fixture destruction, carved desks and miscellaneous ruination)

B. Comparisons on the costs and incidents of vandal acts for the years 1972-73, 1973-74 and 1974-75
C. Location of vandal acts
D. Occurrence of vandal acts
E. Methods/techniques/devices used to reduce the costs of vandalism
F. Security cost data for the following classifications:

1. Exterior Building Lighting
2. Security Equipment
3. Break Resistant Windows
4. Security Personnel

G. Vandalism and School Security Policies

Survey results for each of the areas of vandalism will be presented in a table format (where applicable) proceeded by a narrative summary and conclusion from the data within the tables. For the purposes of this survey, vandalism is defined as willful and deliberate damage and theft of school property.

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A. TOTAL VANDALISM COSTS - Information was sought in the Total Vandalism Costs section of the survey to arrive at estimated statewide costs for various classification of vandalism. The table format denotes costs for urban, suburban, rural and rapidly growing school districts, with a composite of all responses. Each district category notes the number of responses and the dollar value of the loss. Estimated statewide costs are based on 586 operating public school districts and the Department of Education's estimated 1975-76 enrollment of 1,460,000 using percentages of survey responses.

Table A - Glass Breakage (79% of the districts responding to the survey responded to this survey question).

	Composite of All Responses		*Urban District Responses*		*Suburban District Responses*		*Rural District Responses*		*Rapidly Growing Responses*	
	Number	*Costs*	*Number*	*Costs*	*Number*	*Costs*	*Number*	*Costs*	*Number*	*Costs*
Total Costs	*197*	*$ 973,731.62*	*24*	*$ 370,801.33*	*112*	*$550,592.18*	*53*	*$ 38,546.72*	*8*	*$ 13,841.33*
Mean District Costs		*4,943.05*		*15,450.06*		*4,916.00*		*727.30*		*1,730.17*
Mean Per Pupil Costs		*1.53*		*1.85*		*1.58*		*.69*		*.46*

Estimated statewide glass breakage costs to school districts are projected at $2,288,632.15 based on survey responses. School districts paid 73% of their glass breakage costs. The remaining costs were absorbed in insurance and restitution reimbursements. The high district glass breakage cost was recorded at $162,766.00.

Table B - Fire-Arson (12% of the districts responding to the survey responded to this survey question).

	Composite of All Responses		*Urban District Responses*		*Suburban District Responses*		*Rural District Responses*		*Rapidly Growing Responses*	
	Number	*Costs*	*Number*	*Costs*	*Number*	*Costs*	*Number*	*Costs*	*Number*	*Costs*
Total Costs	*31*	*$402,298.26*	*9*	*$138,111.17*	*19*	*$260,337.09*	*3*	*$3,850.00*	*NO*	
Mean District Costs		*12,977.36*		*15,345.69*		*13,701.95*		*1,283.33*	*RESPONSES*	
Mean Per Pupil Costs		*1.46*		*1.00*		*2.02*		*.41*	*RECORDED*	

Estimated statewide fire-arson costs to school districts are projected at $912,567.96 based on survey responses. School districts paid 17% of fire-arson losses from survey responses. The highest district cost due to fire-arson was recorded at $150,000.00.

Table C - Theft (Stolen equipment and furniture) (54% of the districts responding to the survey responded to this survey question).

	Composite of All Responses		*Urban District Responses*		*Suburban District Responses*		*Rural District Responses*		*Rapidly Growing Responses*	
	Number	*Costs*	*Number*	*Costs*	*Number*	*Costs*	*Number*	*Costs*	*Number*	*Costs*
Total Costs	*135*	*$379,746.18*	*17*	*$181,953.05*	*80*	*$157,848.88*	*33*	*$25,752.13*	*5*	*$14,192.12*
Mean District Costs		*2,812.93*		*10,703.12*		*1,973.11*		*780.37*		*2,838.42*
Mean Per Pupil Costs		*.73*		*1.02*		*.56*		*.63*		*.92*

Estimated statewide theft costs to school districts are projected at $922,641.04 based on survey responses. School districts paid 47% of the costs due to theft. The highest district loss due to theft was recorded at $115,000.00.

Table D - Property Destruction (56% of the districts responding to the survey responded to this question).

	Composite of All Responses		Urban District Responses		Suburban District Responses		Rural District Responses		Rapidly Growing Responses	
	Number	Costs	Number	Costs	Number	Costs	Number	Costs	Number	Costs
Total Costs	139	$432,529.42	19	$117,999.50	86	$300,286.30	30	$11,499.22	4	$2,744.40
Mean District Costs		3,111.72		6,210.50		3,491.70		383.31		686.10
Mean Per Pupil Costs		.93		1.09		1.02		.23		1.02

Estimated statewide property destruction costs to school districts are projected at $1,020,644.16 based on survey responses. The highest district costs due to property destruction was $43,250.00. School districts paid 87% of the costs associated with property destruction.

Table E - Summary of Vandalism Costs based on Estimated Statewide Costs. (Estimated statewide costs are projected based on the percentage of survey responses for each loss classification, assuming that the responses approximate statewide loss experience).

	Estimated Statewide Costs
Glass Breakage	$2,288,632.15
Fire-Arson	912,567.96
Theft	922,641.04
Property Destruction	1,020,644.16
Total	$5,144,485.31

B. COMPARISON OF VANDAL COSTS AND INCIDENTS - Information was sought as to whether school vandalism costs and incidents have increased, decreased or remained constant for the years 1972-73, 1973-74 and 1974-75. Tables F and G are formatted to denote percentage responses for cost and incidents of urban, suburban, rural and rapidly growing school districts, with a composite for all responses.

Table F - Cost Comparison

	Composite of All Responses			Urban District Responses			Suburban District Responses			Rural District Responses			Rapidly Growing Responses		
	Higher	Same	Lower	Higher	Same	Lower	Higher	Same	Lower	Higher	Same	Lower	Higher	Same	Lower
1973-74 with 1972-73	30%	38%	32%	40%	24%	36%	37%	38%	31%	25%	42%	33%	23%	44%	33%
1974-75 with 1973-74	47%	33%	20%	50%	29%	21%	50%	32%	18%	37%	37%	26%	71%	29%	----

Based on survey responses, vandalism costs in 1973-74, were lower than vandalism cost in 1972-73. Deviations from the composite totals are found in cost responses from urban and suburban districts. Vandalism costs in 1974-75 were higher than vandalism costs in 1973-74. All district categories reported higher vandalism costs.

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Table G - Incident Comparison

	Composite of All Responses			*Urban District Responses*			*Suburban District Responses*			*Rural District Responses*			*Rapidly Growing Responses*		
	Higher	*Same*	*Lower*	*Higher*	*Same*	*Lower*	*Higher*	*Same*	*Lower*	*Higher*	*Same*	*Lower*	*Higher*	*Same*	*Lower*
1973-74 with 1972-73	*25%*	*46%*	*29%*	*28%*	*40%*	*32%*	*26%*	*49%*	*25%*	*22%*	*43%*	*35%*	*23%*	*44%*	*33%*
1974-75 with 1973-74	*35%*	*43%*	*22%*	*42%*	*42%*	*16%*	*32%*	*45%*	*23%*	*34%*	*39%*	*27%*	*71%*	*29%*	----

Based on survey responses, vandalism incidents in 1973-74 were lower than vandalism incidents in 1972-73. The deviation from the composite totals was found in the suburban district classification. Vandalism incidents in 1974-75 were higher than vandalism incidents in 1973-74.

C. LOCATION OF VANDAL ACTS - This section denotes the areas where vandalism was reported as occurring most often. The locations listed below are prioritized from survey responses.

1. Washrooms
2. Exterior of School Buildings
3. Classrooms
4. Playgrounds
5. Halls and Stair Areas
6. Gymnasiums
7. Cafeterias and Food Storage Areas
8. Stadiums and Athletic Fields
9. Parking Lots
10. School Buses
11. Laboratories
12. Office Areas
13. Auditorium and Stage Areas

A total of $323,226.78 in exterior school building vandalism was reported by 106 school districts, which amounts to $3,049.31 mean costs for reporting districts. A total of $121,614.88 in washroom vandalism was reported by 85 school districts amounting to mean costs for reporting districts of $1,430.76. A total of $119,894.10 in classroom vandalism was reported by 60 school districts, which amounts to a mean cost for reporting districts of $1,998.24.

D. OCCURRENCE OF VANDAL ACTS - This section of the survey sought to identify the times when school vandalism is most likely to occur. Respondents were asked to prioritize the times when the greatest amount of vandalism occurred. Responses were weighted and rank ordered as follows:

1. Weekends
2. Holidays
3. Vacations
4. During day school
5. Associated with evening extra curricular events

Weekend vandalism far outweighed vandalism during other times. The responses indicated that unattended buildings, vacant during weekends, holidays and vacation periods, are most often subject to vandalism.

E. METHODS/TECHNIQUES/DEVICES USED TO REDUCE THE COSTS OF VANDALISM - This section of the survey sought information that would identify the methods, techniques and devices most often used by school districts to reduce the costs associated with vandalism. Respondents were asked to identify their most effective means of reducing vandalism costs. Responses can be grouped into the following categories: (1) equipment, (2) personnel, (3) education, and (4) legal activity. Responses for each category are prioritized as to the number of responses per item.

1. Equipment - The largest number of responses where in the areas of security and vandalism prevention equipment. Responses items were ranked as follows:

   a. Exterior Building Lighting
   b. Security Equipment - Alarm Systems
   c. Break Resistant Windows (Lexon and plexi-glass)
   d. Fencing, Locks, Gates, Signs

2. Personnel

   a. Police (including evening, holiday and weekend security checks along with K-9 patrols)
   b. Custodial and Maintenance Personnel (including 24 hour custodial staffing)
   c. Security Guards
   d. Teacher Monitors during the day

3. Education

   a. Community Education
   b. Student Education
   c. Parental Guidance

4. Legal Activity

   a. Preferring charges against vandals
   b. Parental restitution

F. SECURITY COST DATA - This section of the survey sought information as to the cost of the varied security methods, techniques and devices used to reduce vandalism costs. Responses are from 1973-74 school district data. Responses are recorded for urban, suburban, rural and rapidly growing school districts, with a composite of all responses.

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Table H - Exterior Building Lighting (36% of the districts responding to the survey responded to this survey question).

	Composite of All Responses		Urban District Responses		Suburban District Responses		Rural District Responses		Rapidly Growing Responses	
	Number	Costs	Number	Costs	Number	Costs	Number	Costs	Number	Costs
Total Costs	90	$218,592.48	14	$59,085.28	52	$134,188.00	3	$6,793.00	21	$18,526.20
Mean District Costs		2,428.81		4,420.38		2,580.54		2,264.33		882.20
High District Costs		20,000.00		19,000.00		3,793.00		4,900.00		20,000.00
Low District Costs		20.00		800.00		50.00		20.00		500.00

Estimated statewide exterior building lighting costs for school districts are projected at $512,381.76, based on survey responses.

Table I - Security Equipment (Alarm systems, locks, TV systems, etc.) (39% of the districts responding to the survey responded to this survey question).

	Composite of All Responses		Urban District Responses		Suburban District Responses		Rural District Responses		Rapidly Growing Responses	
	Number	Costs	Number	Costs	Number	Costs	Number	Costs	Number	Costs
Total Costs	98	$1,322,960.88	16	$916,451.83	59	$324,836.05	18	$38 507.00	5	$42,166.00
Mean Costs		13,493.60		57,278.24		5,505.70		2,[illegible]4.83		8,433.20
High District Costs		539,234.00		539,234.00		36,780.00		10,000.00		38,235.00
Low District Costs		20.00		396.00		60.00		30.00		200.00

Estimated statewide security equipment costs for school districts are projected at $3,085,198.58, based on survey responses.

Table J - Break Resistant Windows (26% of the districts responding to the survey responded to this survey question).

	Composite of All Responses		Urban District Responses		Suburban District Responses		Rural District Responses		Rapidly Growing Responses	
	Number	Costs	Number	Costs	Number	Costs	Number	Costs	Number	Costs
Total Costs	65	$249,773.74	13	$ 60,369.30	41	$178,518.89	9	$7,668.75	2	$3,216.80
Mean Costs		3,842.67		4,643.79		4,354.12		852.08		1,608.40
High District Costs		37,800.00		22,713.76		37,800.00		4,280.00		2,216.80
Low District Costs		19.75		200.00		20.00		19.75		1,000.00

Estimated Statewide break resistant window costs for school districts are projected at $585,469.20, based on survey responses.

Table K - Security Personnel (Guards and non-teaching personnel used for security and monitoring) (24% of the districts responding to the survey responded to this survey question).

	Composite of All Responses		*Urban District Responses*		*Suburban District Responses*		*Rural District Responses*		*Rapidly Growing Responses*	
	Number	*Costs*	*Number*	*Costs*	*Number*	*Costs*	*Number*	*Costs*	*Number*	*Costs*
Total Costs	60	$3,580,643.28	13	$3,246,293.36	35	$290,930.36	9	$41,819.56	3	$1,600.00
Mean Costs		59,677.39		249,714.87		8,312.30		4,646.62		533.33
High District Costs		2,565,837.00		2,565,837.00		56,354.00		12,007.56		650.00
Low District Costs		100.00		500.00		100.00		850.00		400.00

Estimated statewide security personnel costs for school districts are projected at $8,393,023.91 based on survey responses.

Significant costs were reported for fencing (29 districts reporting costs of $61,277.95, representing a mean district cost of $2,113.03), window guards (2 districts reporting costs of $17,671.00, representing a mean district cost of $8,835.50), and K-9 patrols (2 districts reporting costs of $26,406.20, representing a mean district cost of $13,203.10).

Table L - Summary of Vandalism Security Costs on Estimated Statewide Costs (estimated statewide costs are projected based on the percentage of survey responses for each security cost classification, assuming that the responses approximate statewide loss experience).

	Estimated Statewide Costs
Exterior Building Lighting	$ 512,381.76
Security Equipment	3,085,198.58
Break Resistant Windows	585,469.20
Security Personnel	8,393,023.91
Total	$12,576,073.45

G. VANDALISM AND SCHOOL SECURITY POLICIES - This section of the survey sought to determine the extent of school district policies concerning vandalism and school security. Table M is formatted to record percentage responses for urban, suburban, rural and rapidly growing school districts, with a composite of all responses.

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Table M - Vandalism and School Security Policies

	Composite of All Responses		Urban District Responses		Suburban District Responses		Rural District Responses		Rapidly Growing Responses	
	% YES	% NO	% YES	% NO	% YES	% NO	% YES	% NO	% YES	% NO
Capture vs. Deterring Vandals	45%	55%	39%	61%	45%	55%	40%	60%	50%	50%
Policy Interrogation of Suspected Student Vandals	59	41	72	28	62	38	47	53	64	36
Trespassing-Controlled Access	62	38	72	28	63	37	59	41	44	56
Security Measures - Use of Specific Security Measures	40	60	50	50	38	62	38	62	38	62
Training Security Personnel	8	92	24	76	10	90	0	100	0	100
Reporting Vandalism	81	19	100	0	83	17	67	33	90	10
Parental Restitution of Costs	84	16	98	8	88	12	71	29	90	10
Municipal Cost Sharing for Vandal Prevention	15	85	13	87	16	84	12	88	10	90
Community Involvement	55	45	46	54	60	40	48	52	60	40
Student Involvement	66	34	77	23	73	27	51	49	30	70
Construction Design to Minimize Vandalism	29	71	46	54	26	74	25	75	50	50

Most boards of education, as indicated from survey responses, have addressed via policies the problems of (1) police interrogation, (2) trespassing, (3) reporting vandalism, (4) parental restitution of vandal costs, (5) community involvement, and (6) student involvement. Vandalism areas not addressed by the majority of school districts, as indicated by survey responses are (1) the capture vs. the deterring of vandals, (2) the use of specific security measures, (3) the training of security personnel, (4) municipal cost sharing for vandal prevention, and (5) construction design to minimize vandalism.

SURVEY HIGHLIGHTS

1. A total of 249 responses was received from the 586 operating public school districts in [illegible]ersey. The 42% response to this detailed survey is viewed as a representative sampling by the Vandalism Committee.

2. The greatest school district response to the Vandalism Survey was recorded in the glass breakage classification, with a 76% response rate.

3. The total estimated statewide costs to school districts due to vandalism are projected at $5,144,485.31, based on survey responses.

4. The total estimated statewide costs for vandalism reduction and prevention are projected at $12,576,073.45, based on survey responses.

5. The combined annual expenditures made by New Jersey's public school districts are estimated at $17,720,558.76 as projected from survey responses.

6. Districts reporting to the survey indicated that vandalism most often occurred in washrooms (mean costs of $1,430.76 per district) and to school building exteriors (mean costs of $3,049.31 per district) on weekends, holidays and vacations, indicating that vacant school buildings are prime targets of school vandals.

7. The estimated statewide costs for security personnel is projected at $8,393,023.91, based on survey responses.

8. The most frequent responses to vandal reduction methods (exterior lighting, security equipment, break resistant windows and security personnel) indicate an emphasis on immediate solutions to vandalism problems. Long range solutions in the area of community involvement, parental guidance and pupil education received fewer responses.

9. Most boards of education have addressed the problems of school vandalism and security in the areas of policy interrogation, trespassing, reporting vandalism, parental restitution for vandal acts, community involvement and student involvement.

VANDALISM COMMITTEE STATEMENT

The New Jersey School Boards Association's Ad Hoc Committee to Study School Vandalism expresses its sincere appreciation to those school districts responding to the survey. The survey results will be of tremendous assistance to the Committee in concluding its work. The survey results should be used by school districts to assess the extent of vandalism in their districts and to compare vandalism losses with vandalism reduction and prevention costs.

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